

Reactions to "Die Schildbuerger" -
A Pre-Release Study of a USIS Film

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P R E F A C E

Dangerous Irony

(or Truth is Stranger than Fiction)

An East Berlin newspaper derides Party Secretary Walter Ulbricht.
By our correspondent Wolfgang Weinert.

Berlin, December 5, 1956.

Recently some division chiefs of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party who are responsible for controlling the East Zone press earnestly labored over an ironic vignette which a short time before had appeared in "Sonntag" (Sunday), a weekly sponsored by the Soviet Zone Cultural Association. They didn't grasp the hidden meaning of this spiritual product right away. One specific interpretation, however, induced the division chiefs to report the matter to their boss, Party Secretary Ulbricht. It seemed the state was once again imperiled. Ulbricht ordered a copy of "Sonntag" containing this vignette to be brought to him. He read:

"In the school of Schilda the children were taught for many years: 'two times two is nine.' One day this came to light and the teaching staff convened for an extraordinary conference during which it was discussed at length how to remedy this embarrassing and deplorable situation. One thing to be avoided, above all, was any danger to the authority of the experienced and indispensable arithmetic teacher. Also the receptivity of the young minds should not be overtaxed all of a sudden. Considering all this, the colleagues resolved, resting on their rich pedagogic experience, not to spring the unaccustomed truth on the students, but to feed it to them, cautiously, in small doses. Therefore, the arithmetic teacher was told to begin with rectifying the error by pointing out that two times two is not, as had been maintained so far, nine, but eight. On each succeeding day he was to reduce this figure by one until finally the true result of the multiplication problem to be solved would be achieved. However, this cleverly conceived plan did not work. It failed because of the rashness of the naughty children for, on the second day, when they were to swallow that two times two wasn't eight, either, but seven, they had secretly during recess scrawled all over the walls of the W.C. the equation

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that two times two is four. The rumor claiming that after this incident opinions were aired by members of the teaching body regretting the abolition of flogging is slanderous and has no foundation whatever."

So much for the vignette. Ulbricht glanced it over once again, and it isn't difficult to imagine how in his mind Schilda was transformed into the German Democratic Republic, the school into mass agitation, how children turned into the inhabitants of the German Democratic Republic and the incorrect multiplication into the propaganda and reporting of "Neues Deutschland" (New Germany), and finally, the experienced and indispensable arithmetic teacher into himself. To Ulbricht the fact of provocation was thus established. All his efforts at converting the Stalinist arithmetic to the Leninist system, which, while proceeding slowly, might be sabotaged by three or four more such ironic features.

According to hearsay, Ulbricht pounded the desk with his hand, shouting, "That's a most infamous blow against the Party." Of course, he meant the ironic feature. However, it didn't exactly hit the nail on the head since in the parable there were voices within the faculty (which in reality would be the Secretariat of the Central Committee) pleading for punishment by flogging. Actually, the following resolution was agreed upon: The editors of "Sonntag" had to regret their refractoriness and to chastise themselves ideologically. Thus shortly thereafter a censor was installed at the "Sonntag." It's just too bad that the "children" already know the answer to the equation.

INTRODUCTION

The present study is the latest in a series of survey research projects designed to obtain audience reactions to USIS-sponsored films during or prior to general distribution.

The USIS feature film "Die Schildbuerger" is a satire caricaturing conditions in the East Zone and the spirit of its present regime analogous to the old German "Schildbuerger" fairytale; a story about the inhabitants of a German village proverbial for their foolishness.

The purpose of the film is to contrast the sham of Pankow actions with the lofty principles proclaimed, and thus to remove any credence which might be placed by westerners in the Soviet regime. In its treatment, the film ridicules the Communist puppet regime in Soviet-occupied East Germany and its obstinate but unsuccessful bids for popularity and public esteem. In addition, by emphasizing the segregation of Communist rulers in Pankow and public dislike for it, the film tries to expose Communism as a foreign force directed from Moscow. The target audience for whom the film is generally intended are average unsophisticated people and the satirical makeup of the picture attempts to drastically expose the fallacies of a totalitarian system, which is not backed by the people, but maintained solely by strong secret police and military forces as well as despotic oppression.

For the purpose of this study, the film was presented to an audience of 300 viewers in Frankfurt/Main. In order to get this audience of "average-type" people who were willing to attend the show, approximately 1,000 contact interviews were made. The invited persons received streetcar tickets to provide free transportation and a free movie-ticket was promised to them as some incentive for their cooperation. Some interviews were conducted right after the showing at the theater, and the remainder within the following 24 hours at the homes of the respondents.

The film showing took place on December 13, 1956 and the interviewing was done by DIVO - Gesellschaft fuer Markt- und Meinungsforschung m.b.H., Frankfurt/Main, a German survey research organization working under contract with the Research Staff.

S U M M A R Y

On the whole the "Schildbuerger" film seems to be received with mild approval accompanied with considerable criticism. While people generally like the film, it seems to leave most of them with depressed and unpleasant emotions.

On the one hand, the content and theme of the film apparently had the most appeal while the manner of presentation was heavily criticized. The use of the title and the credibility of the film were generally approved. However, the uncertainty over the use of humor gave rise to many criticisms. In this connection two particular points were noted - 1) in a list of eight balanced opinions concerning the film, the following two attributes were selected most frequently - "too propagandistic" (34%) and "of current interest" (31%); 2) opposing interpretations of how the East Zone Communists should be dealt with are clearly indicated, since a sizeable majority of the test audience thought the film attempted to convey the message that the East Zone Communists will certainly fade away and therefore people need do nothing about it. This supposed message runs counter to majority opinions of what should be done.

Study of the opinions of the various segments of the population makes it quite clear that the more elite and sophisticated groups are the ones most critical of the film (e.g. better educated, higher income and prestige occupations).

I. General Reactions

FILM LIKED BY HALF OF ITS AUDIENCE ...

Judging from the results obtained by direct inquiry, the "Schildbuerger" film seems to be fairly well received. Asked how they liked the film, 52 per cent of the audience replied "very good" or "good." The weight of opinion, however, leans heavily towards "good" (44%) rather than "very good" (8%). About one-third (31%) indicated a rather lukewarm response to the picture finding it "neither good nor bad" while an additional 16 per cent showed an explicitly negative reaction.

"How do you like the film 'The Schildbuerger Story'?"

Very good	8%
Good	44
Neither good nor bad	31
Bad	9
Very bad	7
No opinion	1
	<u>100%</u>

OPINION LEADING SEGMENTS LIKE THE FILM LEAST ...

While in the overall finding the film is received with mild approval, group-breaks reveal very interesting differences among the various population groupings. Apparently men, the better educated, those in the higher income brackets and in prestige occupations like the film least and express a significantly greater amount of disapproval than can be found among their counterpart groups. The film seems to be better received by older people than by the younger age groups. (Of those above 45 years of age, 66 per cent like it "good" or "very good" as against only 42 per cent and 47 per cent of the younger groups indicating that favorable a reaction.)

"How well did you like the film 'The Schildbuerger Story'?"

	Very good/ Good	Neither good nor bad	Bad/ very bad	No opinion	No. of cases
<u>Total Film Audience</u>	52%	31%	16%	1%...100%	301
<u>Sex:</u>					
Men	46	30	21	1	152
Women	57	32	10	1	149
<u>Education:</u>					
Elementary school	63	33	3	1	117
Beyond elementary	45	30	23	2	184
<u>Income:</u>					
Up to 399 DM	60	28	11	1	106
400 to 599 DM	55	29	15	1	87
600 DM and more	42	34	23	1	67
No answer	42	39	17	2	41
<u>Age:</u>					
18 to 29 years	47	28	24	1	92
30 to 44 years	42	39	17	2	104
45 years and over	66	26	7	1	105
<u>Occupation:</u>					
Professionals	43	14	43	-	14
Businessmen	43	43	14	-	49
White-collar workers	48	30	20	2	116
Skilled and semi-skilled laborers	63	31	6	-	52
Pensioners; retired	67	23	5	5	40
Others	43	37	20	-	30

CONTENT AND THEME HAD MOST APPEAL ...

It is most interesting to note that among the answers to the open query, "What did you like about this film," comments concerning the content and theme of the picture appear most often. While the manner of presentation of the story was liked by almost one-fourth of the audience (23%) more than twice as many (52%) concerned themselves with aspects of the content and theme. Among the latter comments, "the realistic illustration of conditions in the East Zone" and "the analogy between the DDR-government and the Schildburgher" rank highest.

However, 10 per cent reject the film so strongly that they "didn't like anything about the film."

"What did you like about this film?"

A - CONTENT AND THEME (52%)

The realistic illustration of conditions in the East Zone	25%
The analogy between the GDR-government and the Schildburghers	18
Details concerning the plot	7
The people's opposition to the Communist dictatorship	2

B - MANNER OF PRESENTATION (23%)

The clear and popular manner of presentation	16
The humorous and satirical handling of the theme	4
The courage and frankness to handle this subject	3

C - MISCELLANEOUS (10%)

The photography	4
The scenes in Berlin and in the East Zone	2
Qualified answers	3
Other answers	1

D - I LIKED EVERYTHING ABOUT THE FILM (3%)

E - I DIDN'T LIKE ANYTHING ABOUT THE FILM (10%)

F - NO OPINION/NO ANSWER (10%)

108/32

© Some respondents gave more than one answer.

COMMENTS IN DETAIL ...

"What did you like about this film?"

A - CONTENT AND THEME

(52%)

The realistic illustration of conditions in the East Zone:

25%

"It gives us an idea of the misery of the East Zone population, especially their mental distress and their fear of state functionaries."

"The picture gives a true impression of the methods applied by the East Zone government to deceive the people. I've been in the West for only 3 years now, and therefore I can tell the difference."

"I was very much impressed by the realistic representation of the East Zone functionaries."

"It is interesting to learn what life is like in the East Zone."

"The bad economic situation of the East Zone was demonstrated very capably."

"It shows us what life is like in the other part of Germany."

The analogy between the GDR-government and the Schildburghers:

18

"I liked the comparison between the Schildburghers and the present situation in the East."

"The comparison between the foolish pranks of the Schildburghers and the conditions in the East in contrast to those in the West amused me."

"I liked the idea of comparing the Schildburghers to the East Zone government."

"The comparison with the folly of the Schildburghers was very characteristic."

"I felt the comparison between the exploits of the Schildburghers and the present situation was pretty smart."

Details concerning the plot:

7

"I liked the family with the carrier-pigeons."

"I thought it very impressive that the father, a pigeon-breeder, had the courage to criticize the policy of the GDR in front of his politically influenced son."

"I was glad that the cat could get out of the grain-silo in time."

The people's opposition to the Communist dictatorship:

2

"It impressed me favorably that the population is opposed to Communism."

"I approved of the reserved attitude of the citizens toward Communism."

B - MANNER OF PRESENTATION

(23%)

The clear and popular way of presentation:

16

"The contrasts came out clearly and were easy for the audience to understand."

"The thing I liked best was the natural manner of presentation."

"I was favorably impressed by the lively manner of presentation and the way in which the theme was dealt with."

"In my opinion, the logical buildup of the story was good. It will easily sway a lot of people."

"I liked the framework. It was cleverly devised."

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The humorous and satirical handling of the theme:

4%

"I liked the humorous way of illustrating sad events."

"I liked the humorous way of dealing with problems very much."

"I liked the bizarreness."

The courage and frankness to handle this subject:

5

"I liked the frank way of making a film on this ticklish subject."

"I was favorably impressed by people having the courage to show a film like this."

"I admired the courageous way in which this issue was dealt with. It should be shown to the public."

C - MISCELLANEOUS

(10%)

The photography:

4

"The cameraman did a good job. That's all I got to say."

"The optical presentation is good."

"Some of the scenes are quite competently photographed."

The scenes in Berlin and in the East Zone:

2

"I was pleased to see different views of Berlin."

"I liked the scenes which were shot in the East sector of Berlin. Also the pictures from the East Zone were very instructive."

Qualified answers:

3

"The idea is original, but the way they've drawn this comparison is somewhat clumsy. But as to the facts, they certainly aren't misinterpreted."

"At best, it's suited for a youthful audience."

Other answers:

1

"It was shown that history repeats itself, and that today's leaders have learned nothing from the happenings of the past. Some of the citizens are brighter than their leaders."

"I found many of my ideas confirmed."

D - I LIKED EVERYTHING ABOUT THE FILM

(3%)

"I found everything pleasant."

"I felt, it was a good film throughout."

E - I DIDN'T LIKE ANYTHING ABOUT THE FILM

(10%)

"There wasn't a thing that pleased me. Who would be interested in seeing this film? At the most, it's suitable to be shown in schools."

"There was nothing that I liked."

"I'm not interested in films which show a political tendency and I don't like it."

"Nothing at all."

F - NO OPINION/NO ANSWER

(10%)

108%

@ Some respondents gave more than one answer.

MANNER OF PRESENTATION CRITICIZED MOST ...

Common experience in survey research teaches us that it is always more difficult for respondents to formulate their criticisms than likings of a subject, even if criticism is especially invited and encouraged. Therefore, it is not surprising that 31 per cent were unable to cite any criticism.

When the audience was asked what they did not particularly like about the film, the manner of presentation received the most criticism. About half of the test-audience objected to the way the theme was presented and dealt with. The comments frequently reflect strong feelings of disapproval and describe the presentation as clumsy, inappropriate and propagandistic.

The technical aspects, such as the music, sound, photography and acting were heavily criticized by another 12 per cent.

"We are also interested in hearing your criticisms and would like to know what you did not particularly like about this film."

A - MANNER OF PRESENTATION (51%)

Clumsy, inappropriate presentation of the theme	20%
Inaccurate and propagandistic presentation	20
Overstressing of the political side	6
Lack of clearness and comprehensiveness	5

B - TECHNICAL ASPECTS AND SETUP (12%)

The music (sound)	7
The photography	4
The actors	1

C - MISCELLANEOUS (12%)

The negative effects of the film	3
Particular scenes	2
Other answers	7

D - I DIDN'T LIKE ANYTHING ABOUT THE FILM (2%)

E - I LIKED EVERYTHING ABOUT THE FILM
(NO CRITICISM) (8%)

F - NO OPINION/NO ANSWER (23%)
108,0

© Some respondents gave more than one answer.

COMMENTS IN DETAIL ...

"We are also interested in hearing your criticisms and would like to know what you did not particularly like about this film?"

A - MANNER OF PRESENTATION

(51%)

Clumsy, inappropriate presentation of the theme:

20%

"The comparison with the Schildburghers and the story about the carrier-pigeons was presented in a clumsy way and cut out for a rather primitive audience."

"They sort of hammer the story into people's heads."

"I didn't like this mixing of a serious problem with the story of those dear, stupid and definitely not malicious Schildburghers. This pettifying somehow provides a jarring note, for people should be put in a serious mood. The subject shouldn't be dealt with humorously, but rather sarcastically."

"The naive manner of presentation, this depicting things crudely in black and white, is an entirely unsuitable approach to this problem."

"The film is too naive in its presentation. In my opinion, it is not suited to make the West Germans think about the conditions in the East. The situation in the East Zone is too serious and too important to be treated as a bagatelle."

"The comparison with the Schildburghers is bad and dangerously presented. The seriousness of the matter is deliberately minimized. The difference between meanness, criminality and stupidity is ignored. The idea of letting a child act as commentator on the story is inadequate and risky."

Inaccurate and propagandistic presentation:

20

"The presentation is strongly biased. Many things are rather exaggerated."

"The presentation is too rigid and long-winded. It's too much of a black-and-white picture. You feel all the time that you are being lectured by a schoolmaster."

"It's all too obvious that the idea behind the film is to make propaganda. As to the contents, that's open to dispute."

"The film is too propagandistic."

"As a genuine democrat, I consider this film as mere inflammatory propaganda against the German Democratic Republic. We needn't be surprised if the East resorts to the same means to defame Western policy. The confrontation was overdone."

"I didn't like the blatant propaganda against the Russian-backed East Zone government."

Overstressing of the political side:

6

"The subject is too political to appeal to the masses."

"As the film is too political, it is not suited for public presentation."

"I am not too fond of films which merely deal with political subjects."

"The film is a bit too political."

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Lack of clearness and comprehensiveness:

"It is not clear to what kind of audience the film is addressed. To the East? I can't believe it. To the West? The facts described in this film are generally known. To get effective results, one has to show grimmer facts."
"It should have demonstrated even more striking contrasts."
"The beginning of the story should be more detailed. They should show, for instance, how the Schildburghers managed to usurp all power by election manipulations."

5%

B - TECHNICAL ASPECTS AND SETUP

(12%)

The music (sound):

7

"The accompanying music was sometimes too loud."
"The music and other accompanying noises weren't suitable."
"I wouldn't say that jazz is the appropriate music to go with scenes showing conditions in the Federal Republic."
"The sound was technically bad and too loud."

The photography:

4

"The shots should have been better."
"The trick shots showing the comrades running were poor and the movements awkward."
"The setup was too primitive."

The actors:

1

"The actors were not particularly gifted."
"The acting of the East Zone police players wasn't too good."
"The wooden acting."

C - MISCELLANEOUS

(12%)

The negative effects of the film:

3

"Films of that kind do not contribute towards our reunification."
"The conclusion drawn by this film is discouraging."
"It demonstrates the danger of alienation between people of the German Democratic Republic and the West Germans. Seeing the masses of young sportsmen, you can't help thinking that they are genuinely enthusiastic about the conditions in the Zone."

Particular scenes:

2

"I didn't like the shooting and the fire."
"The scenes of mass demonstrations were too loud."

Other answers:

7

"Unfortunately, the film can't help much. It doesn't tell us how an individual can contribute towards changing the hard conditions in the East Zone."
"I would like to see my professional counterpart in the East Zone, that is a man who works in the technical field."
"I would have appreciated it if they had fitted in a nice love affair."
"It can only serve as an instructional film."

D - I DIDN'T LIKE ANYTHING ABOUT THE FILM

(2%)

E - I LIKED EVERYTHING ABOUT THE FILM (NO CRITICISM)

(8%)

F - NO OPINION/NO ANSWER

(23%)

108

G Some respondents gave more than one answer.

SLIGHT TENDENCY TO SELECT FAVORABLE ATTRIBUTES RATHER THAN UNFAVORABLE ONES ...

When the respondents were presented with a card where favorable and unfavorable attributes about the film were listed in a mixed order 81 per cent selected positive items and 63 per cent adverse ones. Among the positive adjectives the "current interest" and the "realistic" aspects of the film were most often chosen; among the unfavorable attributes "too propagandistic" and "too political" were selected most often. In fact, the "too propagandistic" aspect is the most frequently mentioned item among all attributes being selected by a good third of the audience (34%), as against 31 per cent selecting "of current interest".

"In the following we have listed a few opinions which could be expressed concerning this film. Which of them comes closest to your own feeling?"*

The film is of current interest	31%)	
The film is realistic	30	{ 81% (+) favorable
The film is objective	14	attributes
The film is entertaining.	6	
The film is too propagandistic	34%)	
The film is too political	20	{ 63% (-) unfavorable
The film is boring	6	attributes
The film is outdated	3	
No opinion	1	
		145%)

* List not in order of actual presentation.

© Some respondents gave more than one answer.

When the selection of attributes was analyzed in relation to general liking of the film a positive relationship between overall appeal and the choice of adjectives was found.

In the following table it will be seen that those people who called the film "good" or "very good" were about four times more likely to choose positive descriptions of the film than negative ones (117% versus 31%). On the other hand those who disliked the film were, by six to one, more likely to select negative adjectives (134% as against 21%).

However, even among those who judged the film as "good" or "very good" 30 per cent criticized it as either "too political" or "too propagandistic." Among those explicitly disliking the film almost all expressed the same objections. The "current interest" of the story was the most frequently selected among the favorable attributes even by those rejecting the film as a whole (13%).

"How well did you like the film 'The Schildburgher Story'?"

	Very good/ good	Neither good nor bad	Bad/ very bad	No opinion	No. of cases
	(156)	(94)	(47)	(4)	(301)

"In the following we have listed a few opinions which could be expressed concerning this film. Which of them comes closest to your own feeling?"

{ The film is of current interest	40%	24%	13%	25%	92
+ The film is entertaining	9	2	2	-	17
{ The film is objective	22	6	2	-	42
{ The film is realistic	46	17	4	50	91
	<u>117</u> %	<u>49</u> %	<u>21</u> %		
{ The film is too political	13%	32%	21%	-	60
- The film is too propa-					
gandistic	17	42	72	50	102
{ The film is boring	-	2	32	-	17
{ The film is outdated	1	5	9	-	10
	<u>31</u> %	<u>81</u> %	<u>134</u> %		
No opinion	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
	<u>149</u> %	<u>131</u> %	<u>155</u> %	<u>125</u> %	<u>434</u> %

C Some respondents gave more than one answer.

MOST PEOPLE LEFT THE SHOWING IN A DISTURBED STATE OF MIND ...

One of the most important questions in the evaluation of the "Schildburgher" is the emotional impact of the film. On this point the picture seems to become particularly controversial despite fair acceptance of the film as a whole.

Confronted with a card consisting of five balanced emotional reactions to the film, only about one out of five spectators (21%) reported pleasant feelings after seeing the show while the great majority (60%) registered emotionally negative effects. The most frequently mentioned feeling resulting from the picture is a "depressing" one (35%), while another fourth of the respondents stated that the film "affected them unpleasantly". One out of ten were left completely "unmoved" (10%).

The question as to what extent the above described emotional reaction to the picture is desirable or not (from the point of view of the objectives of the films) remains, however, outside the realm of this report.

"How did you feel after you had seen this picture?"

A - The film encouraged me	14%	} 21% - good feelings
B - The film amused me	7	
C - The film depressed me	35	} 60% - bad feelings
D - The film affected me unpleasantly	25	
E - The film left me unmoved	10)	- neutral
No opinion	9	
		100%

One of the more interesting findings of the population group comparisons is that the women and the lesser educated people among the audience are apparently more depressed by the picture than others. While these segments of the population - in contrast to the "more elite and sophisticated" elements - are less critical of the picture, they seem at the same time also more affected by negative emotional reactions.

"How did you feel after you had seen this picture?"

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| A - the film encouraged me | Good feelings |
| B - The film amused me | |
| C - The film depressed me | Bad feelings |
| D - The film affected me unpleasantly | |
| E - The film left me unmoved | Neutral |

	<u>Good</u> <u>feelings</u> <u>A+B</u>	<u>Bad</u> <u>feelings</u> <u>C+D</u>	<u>Neutral</u> <u>E</u>	<u>No</u> <u>opinion</u>	<u>No. of</u> <u>cases</u>
<u>Total Film Audience</u>	21%	60%	10%	9%..100%	301
<u>Sex:</u>					
Men	23	52	14	11	152
Women	19	70	5	6	149
<u>Education:</u>					
Elementary school	19	64	7	10	117
Beyond elementary	23	57	12	8	184
<u>Income:</u>					
Up to 399 DM	24	59	9	8	106
400 to 599 DM	22	64	6	8	87
600 DM and over	18	57	15	10	67
No answer	17	58	15	10	41
<u>Age:</u>					
Up to 29 years	18	60	14	8	92
30 to 44 years	24	60	9	7	104
45 years and over	22	59	8	11	105
<u>Occupation:</u>					
Professionals	28	36	22	14	14
Businessmen	10	72	10	8	49
White-collar workers	20	55	13	12	116
Skilled and semi-skilled laborers	27	61	8	4	52
Pensioners; retired	25	59	8	8	40
Others	27	70	-	3	30

Cross-tabulation reveals that emotional reaction and overall liking of the film correlate fairly well. While negative reactions predominate regardless of the degree of liking of the picture, their presence is greater among those disliking the picture than among the portion of the audience judging the picture "good" or "very good". On the other hand, in the table below, more of the pleasant feelings are found among those liking than disliking the film, i.e. only 6 per cent of the respondents disliking the film reported a positive emotional reaction, 11 per cent of those with a lukewarm opinion indicated good feelings as compared with 31 per cent of those explicitly liking it.

There is, however, an interesting difference to note between the two indicators of negative emotional impact. While the "depressing" effect seems to preponderate among the group liking the film (41%) with only 15 per cent of them reporting that "the film affected them unpleasantly", the majority of those disliking the picture indicated "unpleasant feelings" (52%) while only 17 per cent were apparently "depressed" by the film.

"How well did you like the film 'The Schildburgher Story'?"

	Very good/ good	Neither nor bad	Bad/ very bad	No opinion	No. of cases
"How did you feel after you had seen this picture?"					
The film encouraged me	22%	31%	5%	11%	42
The film amused me	9	6	4	-	22
The film depressed me	41	36	17	50	107
The film affected me unpleasantly	15	29	52	-	74
The film left me un- moved	3	15	23	-	30
No opinion	10	9	2	25	26
	100%	100%	100%	100%	301

III. The Treatment and Presentation

TWO-THIRDS CONSIDER TITLE OF FILM APPROPRIATE ...

The title is an important part in the treatment and presentation of the film story. This is especially true with the picture under scrutiny where the theme as such is generally approved, but the presentation of it seems to be rather controversial (based on replies to query on what was disliked about the picture).

When respondents were asked whether the title "Die Schildbuerger" was appropriate, almost 7 out of ten (67%) replied in the affirmative. Only a quarter (25%) held the opinion that the title of the film was not aptly selected.

The men, better educated, higher income brackets and white-collar workers appear again to be more critical also concerning the title than their counterpart groups.

"As you know, the title of the film is 'The Schildbürger Story'. In your opinion, is the title of the film appropriate and aptly selected, or isn't it?"

	<u>Yes, appropriate and apt</u>	<u>No, title is not apt</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	<u>No. of cases</u>
<u>Total Film Audience</u>	67%	25%	8%...100%	301
<u>Sex:</u>				
Men	61	32	7	152
Women	73	17	10	149
<u>Education:</u>				
Elementary school	72	15	13	117
Beyond elementary	64	31	5	184
<u>Income:</u>				
Up to 399 DM	71	16	13	106
400 to 599 DM	70	22	8	87
600 DM and more	57	40	3	67
No answer	64	29	7	41
<u>Age:</u>				
18 to 29 years	66	24	10	92
30 to 44 years	65	28	7	104
45 years and over	68	23	9	105
<u>Occupation:</u>				
Professionals	71	29	-	14
Businessmen	67	27	6	49
white-collar workers	57	34	9	116
Skilled and semi-skilled laborers	79	10	11	52
Pensioners; retired	70	20	10	40
Others	73	20	7	30

ONE-HALF APPROVE OF SATIRICAL TREATMENT ...

When a direct inquiry was put to the people concerning the amount of satirical humor in the film, almost one-fourth (23%) indicated their dissatisfaction because the story was handled with "too much" of it, an additional 13 per cent objected because it was "too little". One out of two viewers called it "just right".

The same, more sophisticated, segments of the population took a more critical stand than the other parts of the audience on this issue also and reported in greater proportions that the story was handled with "too much" satire.

"Do you have the impression that the story of the film is handled with too much or too little ironic humor, or is it just right as it is?"

	<u>Too much</u>	<u>Too little</u>	<u>Just right</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	<u>No. of cases</u>
<u>Total Film Audience</u>	23%	13%	53%	11%...100%	301
<u>Sex:</u>					
Men	30	13	46	11	152
Women	17	12	60	11	149
<u>Education:</u>					
Elementary school	14	9	66	11	117
Beyond elementary	29	15	45	11	184
<u>Income:</u>					
Up to 399 DM	21	10	57	12	106
400 to 599 DM	20	11	60	9	87
600 DM and more	33	13	44	10	67
No answer	22	20	46	12	41
<u>Age:</u>					
18 to 29 years	25	10	53	12	92
30 to 44 years	25	13	52	10	104
45 years and over	20	14	54	12	105
<u>Occupation:</u>					
Professionals	36	7	43	14	14
Businessmen	29	10	47	14	49
White-collar workers	30	15	46	9	116
Skilled and semi-skilled					
laborers	4	13	71	12	52
Pensioners; retired	20	12	58	10	40
Others	20	10	60	10	30

USE OF HUMOR CONSIDERED QUESTIONABLE ...

While most viewers seemed to think the amount of satirical humor was all right, the replies to another query concerning the use of humor in handling the subject matter, brings the whole device into question. The audience is divided into three equally large groups over the point as to whether or not the film should have followed a more serious line than it actually did. Thirty per cent felt that, in view of its theme, the film was far too much on the humorous side. A little over a quarter of the spectators (28%), while tending to regret the use of humor, do not wish to go as far as saying that another type of treatment would have improved the film. Fully one-third (33%), however, think that it was quite right for the film to present the theme in the humorous manner that it did.

"And here are a few more general opinions about the picture. Would you please tell me with which one you are in closest agreement?" (CARD)

A - The theme of the film is too serious to be handled in a humorous manner.	30%
B - The theme of the film could have been handled in a more serious manner. I don't know, however, whether that would have improved or worsened things.	28
C - To make fun of it was just the right way to handle this theme.	33
No opinion	<u>9</u> 100%

Statistical breakdowns reveal that the humorous line of the film was received with greatest criticism by the men and the higher status groups (i.e. beyond elementary education, higher income, professionals). On the other hand, the treatment was most favorably received among the correlates of these groups. The two groups who seem most receptive to the use of humor in the handling of the theme are the laboring groups and those who are retired.

"And here are a few more general opinions about the picture. Would you please tell me with which one you are in closest agreement?" (CARD)

A - The theme of the film is too serious to be handled in a humorous manner.

B - The theme of the film could have been handled in a more serious manner. I don't know, however, whether that would have improved or worsened things.

C - To make fun of it was just the right way to handle this theme.

	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	No opinion	No. of cases
<u>Total Film Audience</u>	30%	28%	33%	9%...100%	301
<u>Sex:</u>					
Men	35	30	28	7	152
Women	26	26	37	11	149
<u>Education:</u>					
Elementary school	23	21	42	14	117
Beyond elementary	35	32	27	6	184
<u>Income:</u>					
Up to 399 DM	26	31	33	10	106
400 to 599 DM	28	25	41	6	87
600 DM and more	39	30	30	1	67
No answer	37	22	17	24	41
<u>Age:</u>					
Up to 29 years	35	32	23	10	92
30 to 44 years	25	30	35	10	104
45 years and over	32	22	38	8	105
<u>Occupation:</u>					
Professionals	50	21	29	-	14
Businessmen	25	32	25	18	49
White-collar workers	35	30	31	4	116
Skilled and semi-skilled laborers	15	19	47	19	52
Pensioners; retired	33	25	40	2	40
Others	40	33	20	7	30

The following cross-tabulation shows a clear correlation between general liking of the film and acceptance of the humorous treatment of the subject. While the greater part of those who thought the film to be "very good" or "good" also thought that the humorous presentation adopted in the film was the right way to deal with the subject at hand, a good portion still objected to or had reservations about the treatment. On the other extreme, those who said the film was "bad" or "very bad" were much more vehement in their objections to the humorous treatment. Those members of the audience who declared themselves unable to judge the film as either good or bad, while also adopting a more middle position here too, tended to be more on the critical side with regard to the satirical aspect of the film.

"How well did you like the film
'The Schildburgher Story'?"

Very good/ good	Neither good nor bad	Bad/ very bad	No opinion	No. of cases
(156)	(94)	(47)	(4)	(301)

"And here are a few more general opinions about the picture. Would you please tell me with which one you are in closest agreement?"

A - The theme of the film is too serious to be handled in a humorous manner.	18%	36%	57%	75%	92
B - The theme of the film could have been handled in a more serious manner. I don't know, however, whether that would have improved or worsened things.	28	30	25	25	84
C - To make fun of it was just the right way to handle this theme.	45	24	9	-	98
No opinion	9 100%	10 100%	9 100%	100%	27 301

VIEWERS AGREE FILM REVEALS SPIRIT OF EAST ZONE REGIME ...

Another important factor in the treatment is whether the film is felt to portray conditions in the East Zone as they really are or whether it gives a false or exaggerated picture.

About three-quarters of the audience indicated that they felt - by being in agreement with Mr. Schmidt's view - that while the film may caricature conditions in the East Zone it truly reveals the spirit of the regime. Only one person out of ten (11%) agreed that the film was misleading by giving a false picture of conditions in the East Zone.

"Which of these two opinions comes closest to your own view?" (CARD)

Mr. Mueller: The film is misleading. It gives a false picture of conditions in the East Zone. If the rulers in the Zone really were such Schildburghers, they couldn't have stayed in power so long.

Mr. Schmidt: The film caricatures conditions in the East Zone, but it reveals the spirit of the regime as it really is. In many respects the rulers of the East Zone may well be compared with Schildburghers.

Mr. Mueller	11%
Mr. Schmidt	74
No opinion	15
	<u>100%</u>

Comparison of population groupings reveal once again the critical reactions of opinion-leading segments in respect to the treatment of the subject matter. About twice as many of the men, better educated and higher income people accept "Mr. Mueller's" view (judging the film as misleading) than can be found among their counterparts.

"Which of these two opinions comes closest to your own view?" (CARD)

Mr. Mueller: The film is misleading. It gives a false picture of conditions in the East Zone. If the rulers in the Zone really were such Schildburghers, they couldn't have stayed in power so long.

Mr. Schmidt: The film caricatures conditions in the East Zone, but it reveals the spirit of the regime as it really is. In many respects the rulers of the East Zone may well be compared with Schildburghers.

	Mr. Mueller	Mr. Schmidt	No opinion	No. of cases
<u>Total Film Audience</u>	11%	74%	15%...100%	301
<u>Sex:</u>				
Men	15	74	11	152
Women	8	75	17	149
<u>Education:</u>				
Elementary school	7	75	18	117
Beyond elementary	14	74	12	184
<u>Income:</u>				
Up to 399 DM	8	78	14	106
400 to 599 DM	14	72	14	87
600 DM and more	15	75	10	67
No answer	10	68	22	41
<u>Age:</u>				
Up to 29 years	12	78	19	92
30 to 44 years	9	78	13	104
45 years and over	13	68	19	105
<u>Occupation:</u>				
Professionals	7	86	7	14
Businessmen	8	72	20	49
White-collar workers	16	73	11	116
Skilled and semi-skilled laborers	-	85	15	52
Pensioners; retired	13	67	20	40
Others	17	73	10	30

III. What the Film Conveyed

ALMOST EVERYONE INDICATED SOME COMPREHENSION OF THEME

The message and theme of the picture "Die Schildbuerger" is rather obvious. Therefore it should not surprise the reader that only 3 per cent showed no understanding of the theme at all. Making due allowances for such shortcomings as lack of articulation and ability to express oneself on the part of the respondents, we can say that 97 per cent of the audience indicated at least some comprehension. The finding by itself is not necessarily good and certainly not sufficient evidence of effectiveness.

"What do you think the film mainly intended to convey?"

Summary Table

Clear comprehension indicated	19%
Some comprehension indicated	78
No comprehension	<u>3</u>
	100%

Because of the fact that the film is easily recognized as anti-Communistic rather rigorous criteria have been employed to identify some measurable degree of comprehension. Possibly as a result of this decision only one-fifth (19%) indicated clear understanding of the theme.

COMMENTS IN DETAIL ...

"What do you think the film mainly intended to convey?"

CLEAR COMPREHENSION (19%)

The mistakes and incompetence of a Communist regime were demonstrated:

11

"The idea was to draw a parallel to the events and conditions in East Berlin. The story revolves around the inane machinations of the government that's in power over there." "Totalitarianism was to be exposed. In particular, the idea was to describe the Communist dictatorship with the inherent deficiencies of this form of government."

"The stupidity and incompetence of a handful of people who keep a large number of their fellowmen in check by employing coercive means was to be exposed."

"People were to be shown how incompetent the government of the East Zone is."

"The film is an attempt to nail down the chief characteristics of the Soviet regime. This was done not by describing the actual developments objectively, or soberly, but by ridiculing them because of their very absurdity."

(Cont'd on next page)

The dangers of a Communist regime were demonstrated:

5%

- "The dangers of Bolshevism were indicated."
- "The rule of terror of Communism was illustrated."
- "The necessity of combatting Communism was illustrated."
- "It's sort of a warning about the Communist menace addressed to us."

The analogy between the GDR-government and the Schildburghers was pointed up:

3

- "The government officials of East Berlin were compared with Schildburghers."
- "It's an attempt to find a common denominator for the big-wigs of the German Democratic Republic and the aldermen of Schilda."
- "People were to understand that the present rulers in the East Zone have behaved like Schildburghers for years at the expense of the German people."

SOME COMPREHENSION

(78%) +

Description of the German Democratic Republic:

33

- "They intended to describe the conditions as they really are in the so-called German Democratic Republic."
- "People were to get an idea of conditions in the Soviet Zone and of what lies at the root of it all."
- "As far as I know, the idea was to inform people of the way conditions have been in the East Zone in the past."
- "The film was made to illustrate conditions in the Eastern Sector."
- "People should get an idea of how things stand in the Soviet Zone."
- "The tragedy of the East Zone was disclosed."
- "The film told about the political pressure exerted on people in the East and about the attitude of the SED bigwigs."
- "It was to show how a people is being enslaved by false propaganda and political control."
- "The intent was to describe how our brothers and sisters in the German Democratic Republic are being oppressed."
- "The political conditions in the GDR were disclosed."
- "The film meant to illustrate how people over there are held in subjection."

East/West Comparisons:
(General):

(26%)

11

- "The idea was to disclose the contrast between East and West."
- "Conditions in the East were compared to those in the West."
- "It was East versus West."
- "The contrast between East and West was presented."

(Political differences):

10

- "They wanted to point up the difference between a dictatorship and democracy, and between freedom and oppression."
- "The idea was to show the wide gap between East and West - that is, the 'people's democracy' in the East versus genuine democracy in the West."
- "The idea was to describe the political situation of the East Zone. The contrast is presented between the suppression people are subjected to in the East as against the freedom people enjoy in the West in the economic as well as in the political sector."
- "They wanted to illustrate the difference between the social order in East and West."

(Cont'd on next page)

+ Based on number of actual respondents - some respondents gave more than one answer.

(Cont'd from preceding page)

(Living conditions):

"This film was meant to illustrate how different everyday life is in the East Zone as compared to the West Zone of Germany."

"The difference between living conditions in East and West was to be exposed."

"Working- and living conditions in the East were set off against conditions in the West."

5%

It was propaganda against the East:

8%

"It was a propaganda film directed against the GDR."

"It was propaganda against the USSR."

"The essence of the film was anti-Communist propaganda."

"It was a black-and-white picture, black in the GDR versus white in the Federal Republic. I cannot help feeling it was clumsy propaganda."

People are fundamentally opposed to totalitarianism:

5

"They meant to show that you cannot win the sympathies of a people by force."

"The majority of people oppose the existing regime. That was the message of the film."

"The way I see it, they meant to demonstrate that nothing can be achieved by using coercion and pressure."

Enlightenment on the propaganda apparatus of the GDR was furnished:

4

"The idea was to enlighten people on the mendacious propaganda of the East Zone rulers."

"The film provides an insight into the propaganda activities of the East government leaders."

"The lies and excuses, which are fed to the inhabitants of the East Zone and other countries, were to be exposed."

The foreseeable end of the GDR regime was predicted:

4

"The idea was to make people understand that such a government simply cannot stay in power forever."

"People were to understand that the day will come when the inhabitants of our East Zone will be free of all pressure because such methods won't work in the long run."

"A comparison was drawn to show that just as the Schildburghers were tripped up by their actions, the GDR-government will some day go to the wall."

It was a political information film:

4

"The idea was to give people a lesson in politics."

"They furnished political enlightenment."

"They meant to express a certain political conviction."

Other answers:

6

"The film was made with the idea of promoting reunification."

"Freedom and honesty are the underlying ideas."

"They most aptly conveyed the truth."

NO COMPREHENSION

(3%)

No opinion/No answer:

3

112%^④

④ Some respondents gave more than one answer.

OPPOSING INTERPRETATIONS OF FILM'S MESSAGE OF HANDLING
EAST ZONE COMMUNISTS ...

Since the West German population is fundamentally anti-Communist in character, one can safely assume that they will easily realize the theme and generally approve of its tendency. Hence, the two other factors, which are necessary in order to achieve the kind of impact the film aspires to, become vital. One is the treatment, the manner of presentation which the theme received (which has been dealt with in Chapter II) and the other is the impressions which the film and its story left with the audience in respect to the particular situation of a Germany divided into a democratic and a Communistic area.

The picture did not lay out any concrete course of action on how to deal with the Communists. As a result it becomes possible for the viewers to read in two different interpretations of the story: (1) The impression that the Communists will merely fade away and the East Zone will be free again without any action from the West, and (2) the impression that the Communists will never disappear unless everything is done to free the East Zone.

Both views were presented to the test audience for their opinion as to which of them the film tried to convey.

"Mr. Schulze" representing the second interpretation received almost half (49%) of the votes and slightly outweighed "Mr. Meier" (36%) who believed in alternative number one. It should be noted that these differences in the percentages reveal sufficient confusion in the minds of the audience as to what solution was to be disseminated by the picture.

Study of the replies made by the various segments of the population makes it apparent that the more "elite" and "sophisticated" people - which are also the ones most critical of the picture - are more inclined than the others to believe that the film preaches a "do nothing" sermon.

"Which of the following impressions does this film try to convey? (CARD)

Mr. Meier: One day the Communists will just fade away and the East Zone will again be free. We needn't do anything about it, since it is certain to occur.

Mr. Schulze: The Communists are so firmly entrenched in the East Zone that they will never leave of their own will. If we don't do everything to free the East Zone, the Communists will never disappear."

	<u>Mr. Meier</u> "Do nothing"	<u>Mr. Schulze</u> "Act"	<u>No opinion</u>	<u>No. of cases</u>
<u>Total Film Audience</u>	36%	49%	15%...100%	301
<u>Sex:</u>				
Men	40	50	10	152
Women	32	48	20	149
<u>Education:</u>				
Elementary school	26	55	19	117
Beyond elementary	43	45	12	184
<u>Income:</u>				
Up to 399 DM	34	50	16	106
400 to 599 DM	53	52	15	87
600 DM and over	48	45	7	67
No answer	29	47	24	41
<u>Age:</u>				
18 to 29 years	38	52	10	92
30 to 44 years	39	46	15	104
45 years and over	31	49	20	105
<u>Occupation:</u>				
Professionals	43	50	7	14
Businessmen	31	53	16	49
White-collar workers	48	41	11	116
Skilled and semi-skilled laborers	29	59	12	52
Pensioners; retired	28	47	25	40
Others	20	57	23	30

In order to find out whether the impression left by the film is the same as the respondents' own opinion on this particular issue, the same card was again given to the audience so that they might indicate their own feelings. Now "Mr. Schulze's" opinion became majority opinion (61%) and "Mr. Meier's" supporters went down to a bare fifth (20%).

"Which of the two following impressions does this film try to convey? (CARD)
And what is your own opinion?"

Mr. Meier: One day the Communists will just fade away and the East Zone will again be free. We needn't do anything about it, since it is certain to occur.

Mr. Schulze: The Communists are so firmly entrenched in the East Zone that they will never leave of their own will. If we don't do everything to free the East Zone, the Communists will never disappear.

	<u>Film Idea</u>	<u>Own Idea</u>
Mr. Meier (Do nothing)	36%	20%
Mr. Schulze (Act)	49	61
No opinion	15	19
	100%	100%

Cross-tabulation of both replies resulted in the finding that people more or less interpreted the film story in line with their own attitude, i.e. 80 per cent of those thinking that we should "do nothing" (Mr. Meier's view) also interpret the film's message in Mr. Meier's version and 72 per cent of the group with the opinion that we should "act" agree with Mr. Schulze's interpretation of the film.

"And what is your own opinion?" (Same alternatives "Mr. Meier/Mr. Schulze.")

Mr. Meier	Mr. Schulze	No	No. of
"Do		opinion	cases
nothing"	"Act"	(56)	(301)

"Which of the two following impressions does this film try to convey?"

Mr. Meier:

One day the Communists will just fade away and the East Zone will again be free. We needn't do anything about it, since it is certain to occur

80% 24% 29% 109

Mr. Schulze:

The Communists are so firmly entrenched in the East Zone that they will never leave of their own **will**. If we don't do everything to free the East Zone, the Communists will never disappear

7 72 20 147

No opinion

13	4	51	45
100%	100%	100%	301

The men, the better educated, higher income brackets and prestige occupations seem to feel more strongly than others that "everything has to be done" to make the Communists disappear from the East Zone. However, comparing their personal attitudes with their interpretation of the film in this particular respect, one notes that these more vocal groups, as contrasted with their counterpart groups, are more likely to feel that the film suggests a course of action in keeping with Mr. Meier's interpretation of the film ("do nothing").

The significant figures (from the two tables of group-breaks) to be studied are e.g. among the better educated - 62% want action (Mr. Schulze), while 20% think nothing need be done. In this same group 45% think the film preaches the first point, while 43% thought the second.

"And what is your opinion? (C.RD)

Mr. Meier: One day the Communists will just fade away and the East Zone will again be free. We needn't do anything about it, since it is certain to occur.

Mr. Schulze: The Communists are so firmly entrenched in the East Zone that they will never leave of their own will. If we don't do everything to free the East Zone, the Communists will never disappear."

	Mr. Meier "Do nothing"	Mr. Schulze "Act"	No opinion	No. of cases
<u>Total Film Audience</u>	20%	61%	19%...100%	301
<u>Sex:</u>				
Men	23	64	13	152
Women	18	58	24	149
<u>Education:</u>				
Elementary school	21	60	19	117
Beyond elementary	20	62	18	184
<u>Income:</u>				
Up to 399 DM	25	56	19	106
400 to 599 DM	22	62	16	87
600 DM and over	13	72	15	67
No answer	17	54	29	41
<u>Age:</u>				
Up to 29 years	21	63	16	92
30 to 44 years	18	62	20	104
45 years and over	22	59	19	105
<u>Occupation:</u>				
Professionals	14	65	21	14
Businessmen	12	63	25	49
White-collar workers	24	63	13	116
Skilled and semi-skilled laborers	25	61	14	52
Pensioners; retired	18	55	27	40
Others	17	56	27	30

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